



# News Release

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## **State vaccination rates for children lag behind national rates**

**OLYMPIA** — Immunization rates for Washington toddlers are below state and national goals, according to new statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Results from the CDC's latest National Immunization Survey show that 65 percent of children under 3-years-old in our state got a series of recommended vaccines in 2012. That's well below the goal of 80 percent. The national rate for this series is 68 percent.

"Immunizations save lives and are among the most effective ways to protect everyone from serious, preventable illnesses — especially kids," said Dr. Maxine Hayes, state health officer and pediatrician. "We can't let our guard down. Recent disease outbreaks are a reminder that lives are at stake — we want everyone to be up-to-date on vaccines."

Immunization rates for individual vaccines also failed to reach state and national goals.

Washington fell behind the national rates for many vaccines, including measles, chickenpox, polio and hepatitis B. The state's rate for the vaccine that protects against measles, mumps and rubella is 85 percent. The national rate is 91 percent. That's especially concerning with ongoing measles cases in our state and across the country. Measles is very contagious – over 90 percent of people need to be vaccinated to stop it from spreading in our communities.

Washington and the nation continue to struggle to get 90 percent of toddlers fully vaccinated against whooping cough. In our state, 84 percent of toddlers got all four doses compared to 83 percent at the national level. Whooping cough can be life-threatening for young babies. While reported whooping cough cases in Washington are much lower than the epidemic levels in 2012, the disease is always present at some level.

Very few kids are completely unvaccinated. Some parents choose to skip or delay getting their child some vaccines, which leaves kids at-risk for serious diseases. The department will continue

partnerships with health care providers, health plans, local public health agencies and parents to support kids getting the right immunization at the right time.

The CDC changed its method to gather information about childhood immunization rates in 2012. The organization called more cell phones for the phone-based survey. Though state and federal immunization rates appear to be lower than previous years, the rates can't be compared accurately.

The new method will make for more accurate results in the long run. Yet there's concern that most of Washington's immunization rates are under national rates and well under the goals.

"We're disappointed to see rates that may not keep Washington kids and communities protected from serious diseases," Hayes said. "At the same time, we're glad to have a more accurate picture of what is going on and where to focus our efforts."

Washington health care providers give all recommended vaccines for children through age 18. Providers may charge an office visit and an administration fee to give the vaccine. However, people who can't afford the administration fee can ask to have it waived. Contact the [local health agency](#) in your area or the [Family Health Hotline](#) at 1-800-322-2588 for help finding a provider or immunization clinic.

More information on immunization is on the [Department of Health website](#). The [National Immunization Survey](#) is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. County-level data is not included in the survey.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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